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Some summer records from north-west Somalia

In 1986 I spent five weeks (21 July to 24 August) in northern Somalia based in Hargeisa. Thirteen field trips were made into the surrounding countryside, of which some were repeat visits, but all, with the exception of one trip to Berbera on the coast, were within 65 km of Hargeisa.

The landscape in the Hareisa area is undulating to hilly arid bush, and the river and stream beds were dry in August. Denser shrubs and trees occur along the river and stream courses. The recent increase in bunding to prevent rapid run-off and to aid soil infiltration has resulted in an increase in the growth of maize as fodder for livestock. Accompanying the bunding programme is the provision of water points for livestock and humans. This increase in available water is providing new habitats for wetland species such as the Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopica*, Redhank *Tringa totanus*, Greenshank *T. nebularia* and Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*. Unfortunately some of these water points dry out towards the end of the dry season.

Ash & Miskell (1983)—hereafter referred to as A&M, Williams & Arlott (1980) and Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1980) were used for identification, but Volume 2 of the last work did not arrive in time to aid identification of many of the smaller passerines.

A total of 118 species was identified, the majority of which have already been

record by A&M or Clarke (1985). Only species of interest and new distributional data are recorded here. The atlas form of $1/2 \times 1/2$ -degree squares used by A&M has been followed, as has the method of presenting the data. The species number refers to the bird's number in A&M and the status as shown by these authors is given in parentheses after each of my records.

24. *Ardea melanocephala* **Black-headed Heron** Two by a roadside water-hole near Botor and a third flying over, 17 August. 18b. (Scarce visitor to the NW with only three previous records in that area.)

27. *Ardeola ralloides* **Squacco Heron** One in a maize field near Botor, 19 August. 18b. (Rare in NW west of 46°E.)

34. *Egretta intermedia* **Yellow-billed Egret** One well outside its usual range by a water-hole at Botor, 17 August. 18b. Yellow bill, black legs and feet and size confirm identification, but not seen again on two subsequent visits. (Locally numerous non-breeding visitor to southern inland wetlands south of 40°N.)

69. *Sagittarius serpentarius* **Secretary Bird** Pair on nest at Aburin Farm, 5 August. 18d. (Uncommon resident in north above 8°N.)

173. *Vanellus melanopterus* **Black-winged Plover** Ten in a flock at Botor, 19 August. 18b. (Rare non-breeding visitor with only two previous records in February and May.)

185. *Tringa totanus* **Redshank** Two by a water-hole near Hargeisa, 12 August. 19a. One at a water-hole at Botor, 19 August. 18b. (Only four inland records for the whole of Somalia.)

203. *Recurvirostra avosetta* **Avocet** One by a water-hole near Hargeisa, 12 August. 19a. (Irregular rare non-breeding visitor of unknown origin. Recorded on nine occasions in two areas in NW and SE in Nov–May.)

209. *Cursorius cursor* **Cream-coloured Courser** Two near Ged Deeble, 8 August and two there on 16th. 19a. One adult with two young at Botor, 18 August. 18b. (Widely recorded.)

264. *Treron waalia* **Bruce's Green Pigeon** Pair feeding two large young in *Ficus* sp. near Ged Deeble on 16 August. 18b. (Common widespread resident in N above 8°N, but only three previous breeding records—A&M and Clarke 1985.)

281. *Tyto alba* **Barn Owl** One in a barn at Aburin Experimental Farm, 5 August. 18d. (Rare with only one previous record in NW.)

324. *Merops apiaster* **Eurasian Bee-eater** One near Botor, 17 August. 18d. One positively identified 20 August in Hargeisa (19a) at a time when flocks of 15–20 unidentified bee-eaters were in the area. (Seldom recorded Palaearctic passage migrant seen three times in August in NW in 19a.)

346. *Bucorvus abyssinicus* **Abyssinian Ground Hornbill** Two seen from Botor Road on 17 August. 18b. (Rare and local, presumed resident in open country in NW west of 48°E. Clarke (1985) has added a few more records.)

370. *Eremopterix leucotis* **Chestnut-backed Sparrow Lark** One on farmland near Ged Deeble, 18 August. 18b. (Only recorded in grassy areas and cultivated

land along the border in the NW.)

506. *Batis orientalis* **Grey-headed Batis** Pair seen with four young in bushes at side of stream bed near Hargeisa on 31 July and 10 August. 19a.

554. *Creatophora cinerea* **Wattled Starling** Large flocks included young still being fed by parents near Hargeisa on 6 August suggesting local breeding. 19 a. (There are no breeding records in Somalia.)

585. *Euplectes franciscanus* **Northern Red Bishop** Very common 10, 16, 18 August in agricultural area of Heedho (18a) and Botor (18b) where males were displaying. (Recorded as uncommon resident in NW above 9°N.)

615. *Vidua macroura* **Pin-tailed Whydah** One male near Ged Deeble on 8 August. 19a. (Not recorded in NW.)

635. *Serinus donaldsoni* **Grosbeak Canary** Three separate individuals in bush scrub at Botot, 19 August. 18b. (The first record for the NW area.)

Additional new square data

2. *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Little Grebe 18b.

22. *Ardea cinerea* Grey Heron 18b.

38. *Ciconia abdimii* Abdim's Stork 11c.

167. *Charadrius tricollaris* Three-banded Plover 18b.

182. *Tringa nebularia* Greenshank 18b.

202. *Himantopus himantopus* Black-winged Stilt 18bd.

206. *Burhinus capensis* Spotted Thicknee 18d.

379. *Galerida cristata* Crested Lark 18d.

523. *Laniarius ferrugineus* Tropical Boubou 19a.

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Gazetteer

Aburin Farm	9°29' N 43°48' E	18d
Berbera	10°26' N 45°02' E	11c
Botor	9°41' N 43°31' E	18b
Ged Deeble	9°41' N 44°06' E	19a
Hargeisa	9°33' N 44°04' E	19a

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